

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JAKART 10341 220654Z

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SUBJ: INDONESIAN REACTIONS TO US PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION

BEGIN SUMMARY: US INDONESIAN RELATIONS APPEAR TO HAVE WEATHERED IMMEDIATE TRANSITION FROM NIXON TO FORD ADMINISTRATIONS WELL. OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL COMMENT INDICATES EARLIER DOUBTS ABOUT IMPACT OF PRESIDENTIAL CRISIS ON US FOREIGN POLICY HAVE BEEN LARGELY ALLAYED BY EFFECTIVE USG ASSURANCES OF CONTINUITY. WIDESPREAD REGRET OVER RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT NIXON, WHO WAS MUCH ESTEEMED HERE FOR HIS FOREIGN POLICY, AND GENERAL LACK UNDERSTANDING ISSUES AT STAKE IN WATERGATE, HAVE BEEN TEMPERED BY ADMIRATION FOR ORDERLY RESOLUTION OF CRISIS IN US THROUGH CONSTITUTIONAL, DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURES. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING PAST YEAR WATERGATE CRISIS HAS BEEN WELL COVERED IN INDONEIAN PRESS, AND LITERATE INDONESIANS HAVE CLOSELY FOLLOWED MAIN EVENTS. WATERGATE CHALLENGE TO PRESIDENT NIXON CAUSED CONSIDERABLE WORRY IN GOI LEADERSHIP CIRCLES BECUASE OF ADIRATION FOR NIXON'S FOREIGN POLICIES AND BELIEF THAT PERSONAL LINK BETWEEN SUHARTO AND NIXON WAS IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN US SUPPORT FOR INDONESIA.

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PAGE 02 JAKART 10341 220654Z

HOWEVER, EMBASSY ASSURANCES AND STATEMENTS BY SECRETARY

KISSINGER ABOUT CONTINUITY AND BIPARTISAN NATURE OF US FOREIGN POLICY HELPED MUTE THESE FEARS. WHEN PRESIDENT NIXON ANNOUNCED HIS RESIGNATION GOI SEEMED PREPARED FOR EVENT, AND TIMELY LETTERS FROM PRESIDENT FORD TO SUHARTO AND SECRETARY KISSINGER TO FONMIN MALIK, WHICH WERE REINFORCED BY STATEMENTS BY AMBASSADOR TO PRESS, WERE EXTREMELY HELPFUL IN REASSURING GOI AND PUBLIC OF CONTINUITY IN US POLICY TOWARD INDONESIA AND DESIRE FOR CONTINUED CLOSE, FRIENDLY RELATIONS.

2. IN MEETING WITH PRESS AUGUST 12 MALIK REVEALED TEXTS OF FORD AND KISSINGER LETTERS AND REITERATED THAT CHANGE IN US ADMINISTRATION WOULD NOT INFLUENCE RELATIONS WITH INDONESIA. MALIK NOTED STATEMENT IN PRESIDENT FORD'S LETTER TO SUHARTO THAT US BELIEVES INDONESIA HAS SPECIAL PLACE IN ASIA. IN EARLIER STATEMENT AUGUST 9, MALIK EXPRESSED SYMPATHY FOR PRESIDENT NIXON, CALLING HIM A GOOD FRIEND, AND SAID "NIXON DOCTRINE WILL CONTINUE."

3. PRESS ALSO GAVE HEAVY COVERAGE TO AMBASSADOR'S STATEMENT TO PRESS AUGUST 9 THAT US FOREIGN POLICY IS SUPPORTED BY BIPARTISAN CONSENSUS IN CONGRESS, THAT CLOSE RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES WOULD NOT CHANGE, AND THAT US WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT OF INDONESIA.

4. IN REMARKS AT OPENING OF PARLIAMENT AUGUST 15, WHICH PROCEEDED PRESIDENT SUHARTO'S ANNUAL STATE ADDRESS, SPEAKER IDHAM CHALID EXTENDED GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT FORD AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN INDONESIA AND US WOULD CONTINUE.

5. HEAVY EDITORIAL COMMENT ON US PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION EMPHASIZED PERSONAL TRAGEDY OF WATERGATE FOR PRESIDENT NIXON AND STRESSED HIS GREAT FOREIGN POLICY CONTRIBUTIONS. SEVERAL PAPERS WROTE APPRECIATIVELY OF NIXON LEGACY, NOTING HE WOULD BE REMEMBERED BY INDONESIANS; AND MOST PREDICTED CONTINUITY IN US POLICY IN VIEW OF REASSURANCES FROM PRESIDENT FORD AND SECRETARY KISSINGER.
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PAGE 03 JAKART 10341 220654Z

6. SLIGHTLY MORE GUARDED VIEW WAS EXPRESSED BY PROTESTANT SINAR HARAPAN, WHICH PREDICTED THERE WOULD BE NO DRAMATIC INITIATIVES IN EARLY DAYS OF FORD ADMINISTRATION AND THAT PERHAPS NEW PRESIDENT WOULD DEVOTE LESS TIME TO WORLD PROBLEMS UNTIL DOMESTIC PROBLEMS WERE RESOLVED. MOSLEM-BACKED PELITA OFFERED GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT FORD, BUT SAID INDONESIA WOULD "WAIT AND SEE" BEFORE APPRAISING

HIS APPROACH TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

7. OTHER MAJOR THEME OF EDITORIALS WAS STRENGTH OF AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS IN RESOLVING CRISIS THROUGH LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL MEANS. MILITARY-SPONSORED ANGKATAN BERSENJATA PRAISED US SYSTEM FOR PUNISHING "WATERGATE-TYPE CRIMES" WHICH GO UNPUNISHED IN MANY COUNTRIES AND ARE "ROUTINE" IN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. EDITORIAL SALUTED US SUPREME COURT AS "GUARDIAN OF THE CONSTITUTION" AND CONGRESS AS "VOICE OF THE PEOPLE."

8. SUARA KARYA(BACKED BY GOVERNMENT POLITICAL GROUP GOLKAR) PRAISED NIXON'S PATRIOTISM IS RESIGNING FOR GOOD OF THE COUNTRY. EDITORIAL NOTED IMPRESSIVE NATURE OF TRANSITION, CONTRASTING IT WITH POLITICAL UPHEAVALS THAT OCCUR IN UNDER-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES UNDER SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES.

9. SIMILAR THEME WAS STRESSED IN ARMED FORCES-BACKED BERITA YUDHA, WHICH CALLED NIXON RESIGNATION AN "HISTORIC EVENT" WHICH VINDICATED DEMOCRACY AND DISPLAYED THE UNIQUENESS OF AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM. SECOND BERITA YUDHA EDITORIAL NOTED APPROVINGLY THAT AMERICANS

INSIST ON LEGAL APPROACH TO SOLVING CRISIS, AND "PLAYING BY THE RULES OF THE GAME."

10. NATIONALIST-SUKARNOIST MERDEKA, IN ACERBIC COMMENT ON LESSONS OF WATERGATE, SAID NIXON'S "THIRST FOR POWER," INFLUENCE OF "YES MEN" AROUND HIM, AND WEAKNESS OF CONGRESS CREATED US CRISIS AND SHOULD BE LESSON FOR FUTURE. ANOTHER MERDEKA EDITORIAL CRYPTICALLY ASSOCIATED PRESIDENT FORD'S ANTI-INFLATION POLICY WITH PROBABLE INCREASE IN INFLUENCE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 JAKART 10341 220654Z

OF "PENTAGON AND WALL STREET" IN NEW ADMINISTRATION.

11. SEVERAL SENIOR GOI CIVILIAN AND MILITARY OFFICIALS HAVE PRIVATELY CONGRATULATED EMBASSY ON LAWFUL, CONSTITUTIONAL MANNER IN WHICH WATERGATE CRISIS WAS SOLVED. ONE EMBASSY INFORMANT, A SHARP CRITIC OF GOI, SAID OLDER GENERATION OF INDONESIAN INTELLECTUALS ARE ELATED BY WAY AMERICAN DEMOCRACY HAS TRIUMPHED, CONTRASTING THIS WITH WHAT HE CALLED "POLICE STATE" METHODS PRACTICED IN INDONESIA.

12. CONTINUITY OF MAIN OUTLINES OF US FOREIGN POLICY IS GIST OF SHORT PAPER PREPARED FOR PRESIDENT SUHARTO BY ALI MURTOPO'S CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC STUDIES. PAPER NOTES DECLINE OF US CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN FOREIGN

AID AND BELIEF IN USG THAT INDONESIA NOW BETTER ABLE TO
FINANCE ITS NEEDS THROUGH NEW OIL REVENUES, BUT DOES NOT
CONNECT THESE ATTITUDES WITH PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION.
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